The Sanctification of Scarcity and Sword: The Seven Mountain Mandate, the Myth of Redemptive Violence, and the Militarization of American Civil Religion

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The contemporary American political landscape is increasingly defined by the intersection of high-stakes military strategy and extremist theological frameworks. This paper examines the emergence of the Seven Mountain Mandate (7MM) as a driving force within the Department of Defense, specifically through the lens of leadership rhetoric exemplified by figures like Pete Hegseth. By synthesizing Walter Wink's seminal theory on the myth of redemptive violence with modern dominionist theology, we explore how warfare is being rebranded from a secular necessity into a divine liturgy. We analyze the rhetorical shift toward Secretary of War nomenclature and the dehumanization of geopolitical adversaries as barbaric savages. Furthermore, the paper critiques the role of mainstream media in facilitating this transformation by abstracting the human cost of conflict into sterile strategic data. By juxtaposing the video game logic of defense reporting against the visceral moral realities of peace journalism, this work highlights a growing crisis in American identity. Ultimately, it argues that the convergence of 7MM ideology and military power represents a departure from traditional democratic norms toward a form of militant Christian Nationalism that risks institutionalizing violence as a sacred duty. As the line between statecraft and spiritual warfare blurs, the moral consequences of this ideological shift demand rigorous academic and ethical scrutiny to understand the future of American hegemony.

Keywords: Seven Mountain Mandate, redemptive violence, Walter Wink, Pete Hegseth, Christian Nationalism, dominionism, peace journalism, militarization, American civil religion, geopolitical abstraction, Department of Defense.

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1. Introduction: The Convergence of Cross and Sword

The historical trajectory of American exceptionalism has long been tethered to a sense of divine providence, yet the twenty-first century has witnessed a profound and systemic shift in how this relationship is articulated within the halls of power. Traditionally, the intersection of faith and the military served as a source of pastoral comfort for soldiers or a broad moral justification for defensive actions. However, a new paradigm has emerged in which the apparatus of the state is increasingly viewed not as a secular protector of pluralistic values, but as a primary instrument for the establishment of a specific theological order. This convergence of cross and sword represents more than a mere resurgence of religious rhetoric; it is a fundamental restructuring of American civil religion. At the heart of this transformation is the normalization of dominionist ideologies that seek to collapse the distinction between spiritual warfare and literal, kinetic conflict. As the boundaries between church and state are tested by a new generation of leaders who view their political mandates through a lens of apocalyptic urgency, the very nature of American hegemony is being redefined. This paper seeks to unpack the layers of this ideological synthesis, exploring how the language of the gospel is being co-opted to serve the interests of a revitalized military-industrial complex that increasingly functions as a theological-military enterprise.

1.1. Defining the Theological-Military Industrial Complex

When President Dwight D. Eisenhower delivered his farewell address in 1961, he famously warned of the misplaced power inherent in the military-industrial complex. His concern was primarily economic and institutional, focusing on the potential for the permanent armaments industry and the vast military establishment to exert an unwarranted influence on the democratic process. In the contemporary era, however, this complex has evolved into what may be termed the Theological-Military Industrial Complex. This evolution incorporates a third pillar: a robust, dominion-oriented religious framework that provides the moral and metaphysical scaffolding for perpetual expansion and aggression. This new complex does not merely lobby for defense contracts; it lobbies for a cultural and spiritual conquest.

The Seven Mountain Mandate (7MM) serves as the ideological engine of this movement, proposing that believers are divinely commissioned to take control of seven key spheres of societal influence. By identifying government and the military as a singular "mountain" to be reclaimed, proponents of this view transform the Department of Defense into a site of spiritual occupation. In this context, the weapons of war are rebranded as tools of the kingdom, and the strategic goals of the state are conflated with the perceived will of God. This shifts the internal logic of the military from a posture of deterrence and defense to one of offensive dominion. The theological-military industrial complex thus operates by sanctifying the pursuit of power, ensuring that the material interests of the defense industry are bolstered by a religious fervor

that views military spending and intervention as acts of faithfulness rather than fiscal or political choices.

1.2. The Thesis of Redemptive Sanctification

The central argument of this paper is that the contemporary American military ethos is undergoing a process of redemptive sanctification. This process is rooted in what the theologian Walter Wink identified as the myth of redemptive violence—the ancient and pervasive belief that order can only be brought out of chaos through the use of force, and that violence is the primary means of salvation. In the current political climate, this myth has been elevated from a cultural trope to a state-sponsored theology. We posit that the integration of 7MM dominionism into military leadership does not just change the rhetoric of war; it changes the moral calculations of conflict.

Under the thesis of redemptive sanctification, war is no longer treated as a tragic necessity or a last resort of a fallen world. Instead, it is reimagined as a purifying fire. When leaders like Pete Hegseth utilize the imagery of the Crusades and invoke the name of Christ during military invocations while calling for the destruction of "barbaric" enemies, they are participating in a ritual of sanctification. This framework allows for the total dehumanization of the adversary, as the conflict is framed as a cosmic battle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. Consequently, the traditional ethical restraints of "Just War" theory—such as proportionality and civilian immunity—are often sidelined in favor of a mandate for total victory. This paper argues that this shift institutionalizes a form of idolatry where violence is not just a tool used by the state, but is effectively worshipped as a manifestation of divine power.

1.3. Methodology: Peace Journalism and Theological Critique

To analyze this phenomenon, this paper adopts a dual-layered methodology that combines the principles of peace journalism with a rigorous theological critique. Peace journalism, as championed by writers like Robert Koehler, deliberately rejects the "video game" narrative of mainstream media reporting. It seeks to bypass the sterile, strategic abstractions that dominate the news cycle—such as munitions counts, geopolitical chess moves, and political polling—to focus instead on the visceral human consequences of violence. By centering the voices of those affected by war, peace journalism functions as a counter-narrative to the sanitized portrayals of conflict that often serve to enable the myth of redemptive violence.

The theological component of this methodology involves deconstructing the specific doctrines used to justify dominionist military policy. By contrasting the 7MM framework with the peace-oriented theology of thinkers like Walter Wink and the historical non-violence of the early Christian tradition, we can expose the inconsistencies and ethical departures present in modern Christian Nationalism. This approach allows us to examine how the language of faith is being

manipulated to endorse a permanent state of war. Through this lens, we will analyze specific media fragments, political speeches, and policy shifts to demonstrate how the "abstract neutrality" of the press often collaborates with the "redemptive" rhetoric of the state to obscure the moral reality of dead schoolchildren and devastated environments. This interdisciplinary approach is essential for understanding how a nation can simultaneously profess a commitment to "liberty and justice for all" while preparing for conflicts that threaten the very survival of the global community.

2. The Seven Mountain Mandate: A Theological Architecture of Power

The Seven Mountain Mandate (7MM) represents a significant departure from traditional evangelicalism's focus on individual salvation and the afterlife. Instead, it offers a comprehensive blueprint for the terrestrial exercise of power, framing the acquisition of cultural influence as a divine necessity. At its core, the 7MM is a mobilization strategy designed to organize the disparate forces of the charismatic and evangelical right into a cohesive political and social phalanx. It operates on the premise that the secular world is not a neutral space but a contested territory currently occupied by demonic or hostile forces. By providing a structured architecture for this occupation, the mandate transforms the vague aspiration of Christian influence into a tactical mission for dominion. This architecture does not merely encourage civic participation; it demands the systemic capture of institutional "summits" to ensure that the laws, ethics, and culture of the nation reflect a specific, fundamentalist interpretation of biblical decree. In this framework, the believer is reimagined as a cultural pioneer or an operative for the kingdom, tasked with dismantling the secular strongholds that prevent the manifestation of God's rule on earth.

2.1. Origins of Dominionism and the New Apostolic Reformation

The intellectual roots of the Seven Mountain Mandate can be traced back to the Christian Reconstructionism of the mid-twentieth century, most notably the work of Rousas John Rushdoony. Rushdoony's theology advocated for the total reconstruction of society under the authority of Old Testament law, a philosophy known as theonomy. While early Reconstructionism remained a niche intellectual movement, its core tenet—that Christians are divinely mandated to exercise dominion over the earth—was eventually synthesized with the fervor of the charismatic movement. This synthesis gave birth to the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), a term coined by C. Peter Wagner. Wagner, a former professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, provided the theological scaffolding for a modern, apostolic form of dominionism. Unlike traditional denominations, the NAR emphasizes the role of modern-day "apostles" and

"prophets" who receive direct revelation from God to lead the church into a new era of global transformation.

The 7MM itself was popularized following a reported 1975 meeting between Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, and Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth With A Mission. Both men claimed to have received a simultaneous revelation from God identifying seven specific areas of culture that must be reached for the gospel. However, under the influence of NAR architects like Wagner and Lance Wallnau, the original evangelical goal of "reaching" these spheres evolved into "taking" them. Wallnau, in particular, has been instrumental in rebranding the mandate for a political audience, framing it as a strategy to "invade Babylon." This shift moved the movement away from mere witness-bearing and toward the active pursuit of institutional leverage. By 2026, this ideology has permeated the highest levels of American political strategy, moving from the fringes of charismatic tent revivals to the inner sanctums of the federal government.

2.2. The Seven Spheres of Cultural Influence

The 7MM categorizes the entirety of human society into seven distinct "mountains" or spheres of influence: religion, family, education, government, media, arts and entertainment, and business. The underlying logic is that for a culture to be transformed, its leadership must be captured at the highest levels of these specific mountains. Proponents argue that if Christians only dominate the "religion" mountain, they remain isolated in a cultural ghetto, while the other six mountains continue to shape the values and laws of the people in ways that are perceived as antithetical to God’s will. Therefore, the mandate instructs followers to infiltrate and rise to prominence in secular institutions—such as the corporate boardroom, the newsroom, the classroom, and the legislative chamber.

This "mountain" metaphor serves a dual purpose. First, it provides a simple, memorable rubric for strategic planning, allowing different groups within the movement to specialize in specific areas while maintaining a sense of unified purpose. Second, it creates a vertical hierarchy of value, where the "summits" represent the ultimate targets of spiritual warfare. In this worldview, the media mountain is seen as the gatekeeper of information, the education mountain as the shaper of future generations, and the government mountain as the ultimate arbiter of force and law. The 7MM teaches that until these summits are occupied by "kingdom-minded" individuals, the nation remains under the "siege" of secularism and demonic influence. Consequently, the mandate justifies an aggressive, competitive approach to career and public life, viewing professional success not as a personal achievement but as a territorial gain for the kingdom of God.

2.3. Reclaiming the Mountain of Government

Within the 7MM hierarchy, the mountain of government occupies a unique and prioritized position because it controls the legal and coercive power of the state. Reclaiming this mountain is viewed as the final step in securing the nation for God's kingdom. The rhetoric surrounding this mountain is overtly militaristic; leaders frequently speak of "taking the gates," "occupying the land," and "casting down ruling spirits." This is not merely metaphorical language for political campaigning; it reflects a genuine belief that political victory is a form of spiritual victory. The 2026 political landscape reflects the maturation of this strategy, as the administration has moved to integrate "faith offices" more deeply into federal agencies and has appointed figures who openly identify with NAR principles.

The government mountain specifically includes the military apparatus, which is viewed as the "sword" of the state. When the 7MM is applied to the military, the objective shifts from secular national defense to the cultivation of a "crusader" identity. This application is evident in the elevation of figures who view their military authority as a divine commission to defeat "barbaric" forces. By framing geopolitical conflict as a spiritual struggle for the government mountain, the mandate provides a theological justification for the removal of secular restraints on the use of force. This "reclamation" involves purging the institution of what it deems "anti-Christian" or "woke" influences, replacing them with a singular, dominionist orthodoxy. As a result, the Department of Defense is no longer seen as a tool for the protection of a pluralistic democracy, but as a weapon for the expansion of a theological hegemony.

3. Walter Wink and the Myth of Redemptive Violence

The work of theologian Walter Wink provides a critical diagnostic tool for understanding the current fusion of military aggression and religious fervor. Wink's scholarship focuses on the "Powers," which he interprets not merely as spiritual entities but as the intersection of physical, institutional, and spiritual realities. Central to his critique of modern society is the identification of a dominant, global religion that operates under the guise of secularism or traditional faith: the myth of redemptive violence. This myth serves as the foundational narrative for the domination system, providing a moral justification for the use of force to maintain order. By exposing the mechanics of this myth, Wink offers a way to see through the sanitized rhetoric of modern warfare and recognize it as a form of archaic ritual. In the context of American civil religion in 2026, Wink's insights are more relevant than ever, as they reveal the underlying theological structure that allows leaders to equate the "shock and awe" of munitions with the "glory" of a divine mandate.

3.1. The Babylonian Genesis of the Myth

Wink locates the origins of the myth of redemptive violence in the Enuma Elish, the ancient Babylonian creation story. In this narrative, the world is not created out of nothing or out of love, but out of the corpse of a murdered goddess. The hero-god Marduk slays Tiamat, the mother of the gods who represents chaos, and fashions the universe from her dismembered body. This story establishes a cosmology where violence is the primordial creative act. It suggests that order is not the natural state of things but is something that must be imposed upon chaos through superior force. In this Babylonian worldview, the king is the representative of Marduk, and his primary duty is to maintain order through the sword.

This creation myth stands in stark contrast to the Hebrew creation story in Genesis, where God creates through the word, declares the creation good, and invites humanity into a partnership of stewardship rather than a struggle for dominance. However, Wink argues that the Babylonian myth has proved far more influential in shaping human history and political structures. It is the "theology of the status quo," teaching that the world is a battlefield where the "good" must constantly destroy the "evil" to survive. This narrative is so deeply embedded in the human psyche that it appears to be common sense rather than a choice. When American leaders speak of "bringing order" to "barbaric" regions through overwhelming firepower, they are essentially reciting a modern version of the Enuma Elish, assuming that peace is a product of victory rather than a prerequisite for justice.

3.2. Violence as the Ultimate Cultural Idol

One of Wink's most provocative assertions is that in modern society, violence has effectively become a god. He defines a god as that which a person or a society turns to when all else fails—the ultimate source of security and salvation. When diplomacy, education, and social programs are abandoned in favor of military intervention, violence is being treated as the ultimate reality. It is an idol because it demands total allegiance and provides a false sense of righteousness. Unlike the God of the New Testament, who calls for the love of enemies and the turning of the cheek, the "god of violence" demands the annihilation of the enemy as the only path to peace.

This idolatry is often cloaked in religious language to make it palatable to a Christian audience. By framing military action as "redemptive," the state claims a divine sanction for actions that would otherwise be seen as morally reprehensible. In this framework, the lives of soldiers and "collateral" civilians are seen as necessary sacrifices on the altar of national security. The myth makes violence seem inevitable and even holy. It creates a closed loop of logic: if violence fails, the solution is more violence; if it succeeds, it proves that violence was the right choice all along. This prevents any serious questioning of the moral or practical efficacy of war, as the "god" of violence is never permitted to be seen as a failure. The 7MM's emphasis on "taking"

mountains only reinforces this idolatry by presenting institutional conquest as a spiritual duty that justifies any means necessary.

3.3. The Psychological Appeal of the Strongman Deity

The myth of redemptive violence exerts a powerful psychological pull because it simplifies a complex and frightening world. It offers a clear distinction between "us" and "them," between the forces of order and the forces of chaos. For a populace feeling insecure due to economic shifts, environmental crises, or social change, the image of a "strongman" deity—and a corresponding human leader—who can strike down enemies is deeply comforting. This psychological need for a protector often overrides rational concerns about the long-term consequences of aggression. The strongman represents the archetypal "savior" who is willing to do the "dirty work" of violence so that the people can remain safe and "pure."

This appeal is cultivated from a young age through what Wink calls the "socialization of violence." From cartoons and video games to Hollywood blockbusters, the narrative is almost always the same: a peaceful protagonist is pushed to the limit by an irredeemable villain and must finally resort to violence to save the day. The message is clear: violence is the only language that "evil" understands, and the hero is the one who is most proficient in it. When this psychological conditioning is applied to the political sphere, it manifests as a preference for leaders who project "toughness" and military might over those who advocate for nuance and diplomacy. The "strongman" becomes a reflection of the deity worshipped in the myth of redemptive violence—a god who does not suffer with the world, but who conquers it. This creates a feedback loop where the public demands a warrior-king, and leaders like Hegseth rise to power by promising to fulfill that archetypal role, regardless of the human cost.

4. Pete Hegseth and the Rhetoric of the New Secretary of War

The appointment of Pete Hegseth as the head of the national military apparatus serves as a sentinel event in the theological-military industrial complex. Hegseth does not merely occupy a bureaucratic office; he inhabits a symbolic role that bridges the gap between modern statecraft and medieval crusading. His rhetoric consistently collapses the distance between the professional soldier and the religious warrior, suggesting that the effectiveness of the American military is inextricably linked to its spiritual alignment. By repositioning the Department of Defense as an institution of holy fire, Hegseth provides a face and a voice to the Seven Mountain Mandate’s quest for dominion over the government sphere. His public persona is built upon the rejection of secular military traditions in favor of a visceral, faith-based approach to lethal force, where the battlefield is seen as a site of divine judgment rather than a tool of geopolitical stabilization.

4.1. From Defense to Offense: The Rebranding of the Pentagon

The shift from the nomenclature of defense to the nomenclature of war represents a profound psychological reorientation of the American state. Under an executive order signed in the mid-2020s, the Department of Defense was granted a secondary designation as the Department of War, a title Hegseth has embraced with singular focus. The rationale for this change is not merely historical or nostalgic; it is rooted in a specific critique of the post-World War II international order. Hegseth has argued that the transition to the name Defense in 1947 signaled a decline in American resolve and a transition into an era of managed conflicts and strategic stalemates. By reclaiming the title Secretary of War, he signals a departure from the "tepid legality" of international norms and a return to "maximum lethality."

This rebranding is essential to the Seven Mountain Mandate's objective because it reframes the military's primary function. In a defensive posture, the military is a reactive force intended to preserve a status quo of peace. In a war posture, particularly one viewed through a dominionist lens, the military becomes an active instrument of transformation. Hegseth's insistence on this title change reflects a belief that the military must be freed from the constraints of political correctness and international oversight to effectively "break the teeth" of those perceived as enemies of God. This linguistic shift prepares the public to accept higher levels of violence as not only inevitable but as the primary metric of national and spiritual health.

4.2. Crusader Iconography and Modern Military Identity

The presence of militant religious iconography on Hegseth's own body provides a visual manifesto for his leadership. His tattoos, including the Jerusalem Cross and the Latin phrase Deus Vult, serve as ancient symbols of the Crusades that have been revitalized for a contemporary political struggle. While secular analysts may view these as mere historical interests, within the framework of 7MM and Christian Nationalism, they are recognized as battle cries of divine providence. The Jerusalem Cross, representing the spread of the gospel to the four corners of the world, is reinterpreted here not as a mission of peace, but as a mandate for the occupation of the cultural and political "mountains."

The phrase Deus Vult—God Wills It—functions as the ultimate justification for military action, effectively removing the human responsibility for the consequences of war. If a strike is willed by God, then the moral complexities of civilian casualties or environmental destruction are rendered secondary to the execution of the divine mandate. This iconography fosters a modern military identity that identifies more with the Knights Templar than with the constitutional principles of a secular republic. It creates a sense of "holy brotherhood" among those who believe they are fighting for the kingdom, justifying a "no mercy" approach to warfare that

treats the adversary not as a human combatant with rights, but as a demonic obstacle to be eradicated.

4.3. The Prayer Service as a Political Proclamation

A defining moment in this ideological merger occurred during a March 2026 worship service held within the Pentagon itself. In this setting, Hegseth transitioned from a political administrator to a prophetic liturgist, leading a service that fused nationalistic goals with imprecatory prayer. By reading from "war chapters" of the Psalms and calling for "righteous wrath" against the Iranians, whom he described as barbaric savages, Hegseth utilized the setting of the Department of Defense to sanctify a specific geopolitical conflict. This was not a generic prayer for peace, but a specific petition for "overwhelming violence of action."

The rhetoric of this prayer service serves as a psychological lubricant for the "shock and awe" tactics deployed in theaters like Iran. When the bombing of the school in Minab killed nearly two hundred people, including over one hundred children, the groundwork for the public's "academic shrug" had already been laid by the theology of redemptive violence. In this framework, the victims are not schoolchildren; they are "collateral" in a cosmic struggle against the "wicked." By invoking the name of Jesus Christ to bless the pursuit of victory and the unleashing of unprecedented firepower, Hegseth effectively rebranded the hell of war as a holy endeavor. This transformation of the Pentagon into a site of sectarian proclamation ensures that the moral realities of blood and destruction are obscured by a veil of religious necessity, allowing the myth of redemptive violence to march on without domestic interruption.

5. The Sanctified Battlefield: Mapping the Government Mountain

The application of the Seven Mountain Mandate to the sphere of government necessitates a radical reimagining of the state's monopoly on violence. In this theological architecture, the government mountain is not merely a bureaucratic peak to be climbed but a fortress to be occupied for the sake of the kingdom. This shift transforms the battlefield from a space of political dispute into a sanctified arena where divine will is executed through kinetic force. When the military is mapped onto this mountain, it ceases to be a tool of a pluralistic democracy and becomes the primary vanguard of a dominionist agenda. The sanctification of the battlefield ensures that every engagement, from the deployment of drones to the mobilization of carrier strike groups, is interpreted through a lens of spiritual destiny. This framework replaces the standard metrics of national interest with a binary of holiness and profanity, where the physical occupation of territory is seen as a prerequisite for spiritual breakthrough. By reclaiming this mountain, proponents of the mandate seek to align the coercive power of the United States with a specific, apocalyptic vision of the future, effectively

turning the Department of Defense into a cathedral of power where the liturgy is written in lead and fire.

5.1. The Military as a Divine Instrument

Within the 7MM framework, the military is elevated to the status of a divine instrument, an extension of God's own sovereignty on the terrestrial plane. This conceptualization draws heavily from a selective reading of Pauline theology, specifically the notion that the governing authority does not bear the sword in vain but is a minister of God for the punishment of evildoers. However, in the hands of dominionist architects, this "sword" is removed from its domestic, judicial context and expanded into a global mandate for crusade. The soldier is no longer viewed as a citizen-servant bound by a secular oath to the Constitution, but as a consecrated warrior whose ultimate allegiance is to a higher, theological calling. This creates a dual-loyalty system where the orders of the commander-in-chief are followed with a fervor that borders on religious devotion, provided those orders align with the perceived goals of the kingdom.

This instrumentalization of the military serves to bypass the moral hesitation often associated with the exercise of lethal force. If the military is an instrument of God, then its actions are inherently righteous, and its weapons are sanctified. This perspective allows for the deployment of "shock and awe" tactics not as a regrettable necessity of war, but as a manifestation of divine glory. The theological-military industrial complex relies on this belief to maintain high levels of morale and recruitment, promising potential soldiers that their service is part of a cosmic narrative that transcends the messy realities of geopolitics. By branding the military as a divine instrument, the state effectively insulates itself from ethical critique, as questioning the morality of a military operation becomes equivalent to questioning the will of the Creator.

5.2. Tactical Decisions as Spiritual Victories

In a sanctified military environment, the distinction between tactical success and spiritual victory begins to dissolve. Every objective secured on the ground is interpreted as a territorial gain for the kingdom of God on the government mountain. This "video game" logic, as noted by critics, allows for the abstraction of war into a series of levels to be conquered and high scores to be achieved in the form of kill counts and munitions expended. For leaders operating under the influence of 7MM, a successful bombing campaign against an adversary like Iran is not merely a degradation of enemy capabilities; it is a spiritual breakthrough that "unleashes" the power of God in the region. The focus on firepower and technological dominance becomes a way to measure the "anointing" of the military leadership.

This mindset creates a dangerous feedback loop where the absence of restraint is seen as a mark of faith. If a commander believes that victory is divinely ordained, they may be less likely

to consider the long-term diplomatic or humanitarian fallout of their tactical choices. The devastation of infrastructure or the loss of civilian life, such as the tragic events in Minab, are reframed as the "breaking of strongholds" rather than human catastrophes. This spiritualization of tactics serves to dehumanize the enemy further, as their resistance is seen not as a defense of their own land, but as a demonic rebellion against the inevitable march of the kingdom. Consequently, the strategic data reported in the media—munitions reserves, ship movements, and air sorties—becomes a form of religious testimony, proof that the "mountain" is being successfully occupied.

5.3. The Erosion of Secular Military Restraint

The most profound consequence of mapping the military onto the government mountain is the systematic erosion of secular military restraint. Traditional American military ethics are rooted in the Enlightenment principles of civil control, international law, and the "Just War" tradition, which emphasizes proportionality, discrimination, and the preservation of peace as the ultimate goal. However, dominionist theology views these secular constraints as "woke" impositions or signs of spiritual weakness that hinder the military's true potential. In this worldview, the Geneva Conventions and other international treaties are seen as secondary to the mandate for dominion. The goal is no longer the management of conflict according to human rights standards, but the total subjugation of those who stand in the way of the theological mission.

This erosion is visible in the rhetoric of leaders who demand a return to "Secretary of War" mentalities and celebrate the "unleashing" of firepower without mercy. By framing restraint as a lack of resolve, 7MM proponents encourage a culture of aggression that rewards "victory at any cost." This shift undermines the role of professional military advice that may caution against escalation, as such advice is often dismissed as being tainted by secular or "globalist" ideologies. As the secular guardrails are dismantled, the military moves closer to a "holy war" footing where the only limit on violence is the limit of the arsenal itself. This abandonment of restraint not only endangers global stability but also risks the moral collapse of the military institution, as it trades its identity as a defender of freedom for that of an enforcer of a narrow, militant orthodoxy.

6. Dehumanization and the Language of Barbaric Savages

The efficacy of the myth of redemptive violence relies heavily on the psychological and linguistic erasure of the humanity of the adversary. For violence to be perceived as redemptive rather than purely destructive, the targets of that violence must be reframed as existential threats to the moral order. This process of dehumanization is not a byproduct of conflict but a strategic prerequisite for it. By utilizing the language of barbaric savages, proponents of the Seven

Mountain Mandate and the new military orthodoxy create a moral vacuum in which the traditional ethical obligations toward one's neighbor are suspended. In this framework, the enemy is not a fellow human being with inherent dignity, but a chaotic force that must be subdued or eliminated to protect the sanctity of the kingdom. This linguistic shift serves to anesthetize the public conscience, transforming the visceral horror of civilian casualties into a necessary triumph of light over darkness.

6.1. Rhetorical Othering in the Global War on Terror

The 2026 conflict with Iran, characterized by operations such as Epic Fury, has seen a virulent resurgence of the rhetorical othering that defined the early years of the Global War on Terror. However, the current iteration is more explicitly theological in its construction. Rhetorical othering involves the systematic categorization of a group as fundamentally different from and inferior to the self. In the rhetoric of leaders like Pete Hegseth, the Iranian regime and its people are not treated as political actors within a complex geopolitical landscape but are reduced to a monolithic caricature of barbarism. By labeling an entire nation as barbaric savages, the state effectively removes them from the protection of international law and the sphere of moral concern.

This form of othering is essential for maintaining the "abstract neutrality" criticized by peace journalists. When the media and government officials speak of neutralizing threats or degrading capabilities, they are using language that hides the human face of the "other." The term savage serves to justify a level of brutality that would be considered unthinkable if applied to a civilized peer. It invokes a colonial-era binary where the Western, Christian force represents order and progress, while the Eastern, non-Christian adversary represents a regression into primitive cruelty. This language ensures that the American public views the conflict not as a war between nations, but as a policing action against an sub-human outbreak of violence.

6.2. The Theological Justification for No Mercy

Perhaps the most jarring aspect of the current military-religious synthesis is the explicit theological justification for the denial of mercy. At the heart of the Seven Mountain Mandate is a triumphalist interpretation of scripture that prioritizes dominion over grace. When Hegseth calls for "no mercy" during a prayer service at the Department of Defense, he is invoking a form of imprecatory prayer that seeks the total destruction of the enemy. This "no mercy" policy is presented as a spiritual virtue—a sign of unyielding commitment to God's justice. By praying for victory in the name of Jesus Christ while simultaneously advocating for the "unleashing" of unprecedented firepower, the state co-opts the figure of Christ to serve as the patron of the sword.

This theological framework effectively replaces the New Testament mandate to "love thy neighbor" with an Old Testament narrative of "herem" or total ban, where everything associated with the enemy is to be devoted to destruction. In this context, mercy is viewed as a form of spiritual compromise or "woke" weakness that prevents the full manifestation of God's power. The 2026 strikes on Minab, which resulted in the deaths of over one hundred children, are thus insulated from moral critique by a theology that views such losses as incidental to the larger goal of crushing the "wicked." The denial of mercy is not seen as an ethical failure but as a tactical and spiritual necessity for the reclamation of the government mountain.

6.3. Historical Parallels: Colonialism and Divine Right

The rhetoric of the new Secretary of War finds deep historical resonance in the narratives of European colonialism and the doctrine of Divine Right. Historically, the expansion of empire was frequently justified as a "civilizing mission" mandated by God. Colonial powers utilized the same language of "savagery" and "heathenism" to justify the dispossession and destruction of indigenous populations, framing their aggression as a benevolent effort to bring order and Christianity to the "darker" corners of the world. The Seven Mountain Mandate operates on a similar logic, viewing the occupation of cultural summits as a modern-day crusade to civilize a secularized and "barbaric" global order.

Furthermore, the current administration's shift toward a "Secretary of War" identity mirrors the absolutist regimes of the past where the monarch's power was seen as an extension of divine authority. By suggesting that the military's actions are willed by God (Deus Vult), contemporary leaders claim a form of immunity from human judgment that echoes the claims of medieval kings. This historical parallel demonstrates that the militarization of American civil religion is not a new phenomenon, but the revival of an archaic pattern of religious nationalism. By reclaiming the "divine right" to use violence without restraint, the state signals a return to a pre-Enlightenment mode of governance where the cross and the sword are inseparable tools of empire.

7. The Media's Role: Strategic Abstraction and the Erasure of the Human

The role of the mainstream media in the twenty-first century has increasingly shifted from that of a democratic watchdog to that of a strategic stenographer for the theological-military industrial complex. By adopting a posture of detached objectivity, institutional journalism often serves to sanitize the visceral realities of warfare, transforming the slaughter of human beings into a series of technical and political variables. This process of strategic abstraction is essential for the continued dominance of the myth of redemptive violence, as it prevents the domestic population from encountering the moral horror that their taxes and theological allegiances

fund. When the media focuses on the logistical challenges of munitions replenishment rather than the human cost of their deployment, they participate in a form of rhetorical erasure. This section examines how high-profile outlets facilitate the normalization of permanent conflict by treating the theater of war as a bloodless simulation, thereby insulating the public from the ethical demands of peace journalism.

7.1. The Atlantic and the Neutrality of Atrocity

In recent reporting on the escalation of conflict with Iran, prominent publications like The Atlantic have demonstrated what can be described as a neutrality of atrocity. This journalistic style is characterized by a cool, academic tone that discusses the mechanics of war without ever mentioning the biological reality of its victims. By utilizing fragments of intelligence assessments and anonymous quotes from senior officials, these reports frame the decision to bomb foreign territories as a complex but ultimately neutral administrative task. The language employed—focusing on "air force retention," "missile-launching capability," and the "harassment of traffic in the Strait of Hormuz"—serves to turn a humanitarian catastrophe into a strategic puzzles. This "abstract neutrality" is far from objective; it is a profound moral choice to prioritize the perspective of the strategist over the perspective of the victim.

The effect of this reporting is to create a sanitized "reality" in which the consequences of war are measured only in terms of their impact on American interests and political optics. When the media discusses the "merits of attacking Iran" through the lens of a vice president’s skepticism or a president’s enthusiasm, they are reducing the lives of millions to a debate over executive temperament. The neutrality of the prose masks a deep-seated acceptance of the inevitability of violence, ensuring that the reader views the destruction of infrastructure and life as a "ho-hum" logistical byproduct rather than a moral failure. By refusing to bridge the gap between strategic data and human suffering, mainstream journalism acts as a psychological buffer that allows the myth of redemptive violence to proceed without the friction of public outrage.

7.2. Munitions Reserves vs. Human Lives: A Values Analysis

A stark illustration of the distorted value system inherent in modern defense reporting is the obsessive focus on munitions reserves over human lives. In the discourse surrounding the 2026 military campaigns, a recurring theme in the media has been the "dire consequences" of a drawdown in American missile stockpiles. Journalists and policymakers alike express a profound anxiety regarding the availability of certain missile systems, fearing that an over-expenditure in Iran might leave the United States vulnerable in potential future conflicts with China, North Korea, or Russia. This calculus represents a radical inversion of ethical priorities, where the maintenance of the arsenal is treated with more urgency than the survival of the people the

arsenal is intended to strike. The "life" of a Tomahawk missile or a precision-guided bomb is given more narrative weight than the lives of the children in Minab.

This values analysis reveals the depth to which the theological-military industrial complex has permeated the American consciousness. In this worldview, the stockpile is a sacred resource, and its depletion is a form of secular sacrilege. The media's focus on the replenishment of these systems ignores the fundamental question of why they are being used in the first place, or what moral cost is incurred when a nation prioritizes its capacity to kill over its capacity to sustain life. By framing the conversation around "resource management," the media effectively bypasses the moral realities of war, turning a lethal conflict into a supply chain problem. This allows the public to worry about "readiness" and "drawdowns" while remaining comfortably oblivious to the fact that every missile accounted for in a stockpile report is a weapon intended to incinerate a human target.

7.3. The Institutionalization of the Academic Shrug

The culmination of strategic abstraction and distorted value systems is the institutionalization of the academic shrug. This is the collective response of a media and political establishment that has become so desensitized to the machinery of war that it can no longer register the enormity of its consequences. The academic shrug is visible when reports discuss the political future of figures like J.D. Vance as being "tied to what happens in Iran." In this narrative framework, a war is not a tragedy to be avoided; it is a "stake" in a career trajectory. The potential for a 2028 presidential run is weighed with more gravity than the potential for a global environmental disaster or the mass displacement of millions. It is an academic shrug that accepts the "looming environmental disaster" of modern warfare as a mere footnote in a report on maritime commerce.

This institutionalized indifference is the final stage of the normalization of dominionist violence. When the media presents the world as a video game—where strategic data points belong to the reporting, but the "blood and destruction" do not—they are teaching the public to view the "hell of war" as an abstraction. This detachment allows the 7MM's vision of a sanctified battlefield to take root, as there is no competing narrative of human suffering to challenge the "redemptive" claims of the state. The academic shrug ensures that the moral questioning of war remains relegated to the fringes of "peace journalism," while the mainstream focuses on the "strategic data" of the crusade. Ultimately, this role of the media turns the catastrophic into the routine, ensuring that the myth of redemptive violence can continue its march, unburdened by the moral weight of the bodies left in its wake.

8. Case Study: The Minab Bombing and the Video Game Narrative

The airstrike on the coastal city of Minab on February 28, 2026, serves as a haunting quintessential case study for the disconnect between high-level military planning and human reality. As part of the opening salvo of Operation Epic Fury, the strike was intended to decapitate Iranian naval command structures. Instead, it resulted in the destruction of a girls' elementary school, claiming the lives of approximately 170 people, including over 100 children. This event highlights the lethal failures of what can be termed the video game narrative—a mode of conflict where targets are viewed as digital nodes and munitions as scores, divorced from the biological and moral consequences of their deployment. In the aftermath, the rhetoric from the Department of Defense and the accompanying media coverage exemplified a systemic refusal to engage with the visceral horror of the event, preferring instead to retreat into the safety of strategic abstraction and dated intelligence excuses.

8.1. Analyzing the Disconnect Between Policy and Impact

The strike on Minab was facilitated by a reliance on intelligence that identified the school site as an active extension of an adjacent Iranian naval base. Despite satellite imagery clearly showing the school had been walled off and operational as an educational facility since at least 2016, the tactical decision-making process remained tethered to an outdated target list. This disconnect illustrates a broader systemic issue: when war is conducted through a lens of dominion and overwhelming firepower, the "speed of relevance" often outpaces the requirements of moral discrimination. The policy of "unleashing twice the firepower" of previous campaigns, as boasted by Secretary Hegseth, inherently increases the margin for catastrophic error. In Minab, the impact of this policy was not a strategic gain but a pile of rubble containing the remains of children whose only crime was their proximity to a target of interest. The failure to reconcile the precision of the weaponry with the imprecision of the intelligence reveals a military culture that prioritizes the act of striking over the outcome of the strike.

8.2. Collateral Damage as a Theological Necessity

Within the framework of the Seven Mountain Mandate, the concept of "collateral damage" undergoes a chilling theological transformation. Rather than being viewed as a tragic violation of "Just War" principles, the deaths of non-combatants in Minab were framed by proponents of redemptive violence as an unfortunate but necessary consequence of a holy crusade. In this worldview, the objective—reclaiming the mountain of government and crushing "barbaric" enemies—is so paramount that individual human lives are reduced to footnotes. The theological necessity of victory overrides the ethical demand for mercy. When the Secretary of Defense refers to such incidents as "unfortunate" while simultaneously calling for victory in the name of a deity, he is signaling that the mission's divine sanction effectively absolves the state

of moral culpability. The children of Minab were not seen as neighbors to be loved, but as secondary variables in a cosmic struggle where the "cleansing" of the land requires the shedding of blood, even the blood of the innocent.

8.3. The Psychological Numbing of the American Public

The final component of the Minab case study is the role of the American public as a passive consumer of sanitized violence. The media's portrayal of Operation Epic Fury as a high-tech, strategic triumph—replete with digital maps and discussions of "munitions reserves"—functions as a form of psychological numbing. By shielding the domestic audience from the images of parents digging through the ruins of a school for their children's bodies, the narrative ensures that the "hell of war" remains an abstraction. This numbing is essential for the continued support of a national budget that prioritizes warfare over welfare. When the public is conditioned to view conflict as a series of levels to be cleared in a global security game, they lose the capacity for empathy and moral outrage. The "academic shrug" that followed the reports of the Minab bombing proves that the socialization of violence has been successful; the American identity has become so entwined with the myth of redemptive violence that the murder of 100 children in a foreign land is barely enough to disrupt the evening news cycle.

9. Dominionism vs. Diplomacy: The Shift in International Relations

The transition from a diplomacy-first foreign policy to one rooted in dominionist theology represents a seismic shift in how the United States engages with the global community. Under the influence of the Seven Mountain Mandate, the traditional goals of international relations—stability, mutual economic benefit, and the prevention of conflict—are replaced by a binary pursuit of spiritual and political supremacy. This shift is not merely a change in strategy but a change in the ontological understanding of the nation-state. In this new paradigm, the United States is viewed not as a member of a community of nations, but as a providential leader tasked with enforcing a divine order. Diplomacy is no longer seen as a tool for compromise but as a mechanism for delivering ultimatums. This approach inherently devalues the multi-lateral institutions that have governed international behavior since the end of the Second World War, viewing them as secular or "globalist" encumbrances that hinder the fulfillment of America's divine mission. The result is an international relations landscape defined by friction, where the "mountain of government" is reclaimed at the expense of global cooperation and the shared pursuit of peace.

9.1. The Rejection of Multi-Lateralism

The rejection of multi-lateralism is a core tenet of the dominionist approach to international relations. From the perspective of the Seven Mountain Mandate, international bodies like the

United Nations, the International Criminal Court, and even multi-national alliances like NATO are often viewed with suspicion. These organizations are seen as secular attempts to establish a "world government" that competes with the sovereignty of God and the providential role of the United States. In the context of Operation Epic Fury, this rejection has manifested as a blatant disregard for international critiques of military conduct. When human rights organizations and UN experts raised alarms about the bombing of the school in Minab, the administrative response was not one of cooperative investigation but of sovereign dismissal. The state's rhetoric suggests that the United States is accountable to a higher authority than international law, rendering the protocols of the Geneva Conventions secondary to the objectives of the crusade.

This unilateralism is justified by the belief that the "mountain of government" must be occupied by those with a kingdom-minded vision, which by definition excludes the pluralistic and often secular consensus of the international community. Diplomacy, in this framework, is stripped of its traditional nuance. It becomes a series of "golden bridges" or "lulls in combat" where the adversary is given the chance to capitulate to American demands or face further "unleashed" firepower. By retreating from multi-lateral agreements and focusing on "maximum pressure" campaigns, the theological-military industrial complex undermines the very foundations of international stability. The goal is no longer to manage a complex world of competing interests but to dominate it, ensuring that American power remains unburdened by the ethical or legal constraints of its peers.

9.2. Apocalyptic Expectations in Foreign Policy

A significant driver of the shift away from traditional diplomacy is the infusion of apocalyptic expectations into the highest levels of foreign policy planning. For many adherents of the Seven Mountain Mandate and the New Apostolic Reformation, geopolitical events are often interpreted through the lens of biblical prophecy. This creates a sense of "prophetic urgency" that can override rational strategic calculations. When the world is viewed as being on the precipice of a final cosmic battle, the long-term preservation of the environment or the maintenance of the global economy becomes less important than "taking the mountain" in the present moment. This mindset encourages high-risk military engagements, such as the strikes against Iran, as these are seen as necessary steps toward a divine conclusion rather than potentially catastrophic escalations.

These apocalyptic expectations change the nature of what constitutes a "successful" outcome in foreign policy. In a traditional secular framework, success is defined by the avoidance of war and the promotion of prosperity. In an apocalyptic framework, success may be defined by the "shaking" of nations or the collapse of "enemy strongholds," even if such events lead to immense suffering and instability. This outlook explains the "academic shrug" noted by critics of

mainstream media; if the future is already divinely scripted toward a final triumph, then the "looming environmental disaster" or the depletion of munitions reserves are seen as minor variables in a larger, inevitable narrative. By treating foreign policy as a stage for the end-times, the state risks sleepwalking into conflicts that are pursued not for the sake of national security, but for the sake of fulfilling a perceived prophetic mandate.

9.3. The Impact of 7MM on Middle Eastern Alliances

The application of 7MM theology has profoundly reshaped American alliances in the Middle East, moving away from a balance-of-power approach toward one defined by religious identity. This is most evident in the deepening of "covenantal" alliances with regional partners who are seen as central to the dominionist narrative. At the same time, it has led to the total dehumanization and isolation of those categorized as "savages" or enemies of the kingdom. The rhetoric of "no mercy" for the Iranian regime, as voiced by Secretary Hegseth, reflects a theological conviction that there is no common ground between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. This binary worldview leaves no room for the kind of "track-two" diplomacy or regional de-escalation that has historically prevented total war in the Persian Gulf.

The impact of this shift is visible in the regional reaction to Operation Epic Fury. Traditional allies, while perhaps sharing American concerns about Iranian regional influence, find themselves increasingly alarmed by the "holy war" rhetoric emanating from Washington. The focus on a "golden bridge" toward a "golden age" for the Middle East—predicated on the total military destruction of the Iranian military-industrial base—suggests a vision for the region that is imposed by force rather than negotiated through partnership. By prioritizing the "reclamation" of the government mountain in the Middle East, the United States risks alienating the very populations it claims to be "liberating," as the visceral reality of bombs falling on schools and infrastructure contradicts the promise of a divine blessing. Ultimately, the 7MM approach to regional alliances replaces a fragile but functional stability with a militant uncertainty, where the cross and the sword define the boundaries of American friendship.

10. Economic and Environmental Externalities of Permanent Warfare

The pursuit of dominion over the government and military mountains does not occur in a vacuum; it carries profound material costs that are often obscured by the spiritual fervor of the crusade. When the state adopts a permanent war footing, the economic and environmental consequences are treated as secondary to the mission of redemptive violence. In the 2026 landscape, the national budget has become a reflection of this theological priority, diverting trillions of dollars away from social and ecological preservation and toward the machinery of destruction. This section examines how the sanctification of the sword leads to a sanctification

of scarcity for the domestic population, and how the "academic shrug" toward the environment reveals a dangerous disconnect between dominionist ideology and the physical reality of a finite planet. By analyzing the true cost of occupying the business and government mountains, we can see how the myth of redemptive violence functions as an extractive engine that depletes both the wealth of the nation and the health of the biosphere.

10.1. The National Budget as a Moral Document

A national budget is more than a ledger of projected expenditures; it is a moral document that articulates a society's ultimate values. In 2026, with nearly half of the United States discretionary budget dedicated to the Department of War and its auxiliary intelligence and nuclear programs, the moral priority of the state is clear: the maintenance of overwhelming lethal force. From the perspective of the Seven Mountain Mandate, this massive allocation of capital is not merely a matter of fiscal policy; it is a spiritual tithe. By prioritizing the mountain of government through military expansion, the state signals that its ultimate security rests in the efficacy of the sword rather than the well-being of its citizens. This "sanctified spending" transforms the procurement of hypersonic missile systems and the expansion of the drone fleet into acts of national faithfulness.

The economic sacrifice required to sustain this level of spending is significant. Resources that could be utilized to reclaim the education mountain, repair crumbling domestic infrastructure, or bolster the family mountain are systematically siphoned into the defense-industrial complex. In this theological economy, the "unleashing" of firepower in theaters like Iran is the primary dividend, while the stagnation of wages and the collapse of social safety nets are reframed as necessary hardships in a holy struggle. The "Secretary of War" rhetoric reinforces this by framing any attempt to reduce military spending as a sign of spiritual or national weakness. Consequently, the public is asked to embrace an economy of scarcity, where the only growth is found in the capacity to destroy, and the moral reality of the "poor among us" is ignored in favor of the "victory" on the horizon.

10.2. Ecological Devastation as an Ignored Variable

The "academic shrug" that peace journalists critique in mainstream media is perhaps most visible in the systematic erasure of the environmental cost of modern warfare. In the 2026 geopolitical discourse, the looming environmental disaster is treated as a negligible variable, despite the fact that the military-industrial complex remains the world's single largest institutional consumer of petroleum. The carbon footprint of a campaign that "unleashes twice the firepower" of previous wars is astronomical, contributing significantly to the very global instability that the military is then tasked with "managing." Beyond emissions, the toxic legacy of munitions—including heavy metals, chemical propellants, and the destruction of critical

infrastructure like water treatment plants—renders targeted regions uninhabitable for generations.

Within the dominionist framework of the 7MM, this ecological devastation is often justified through an apocalyptic or anthropocentric lens. If the earth is viewed merely as a temporary stage for the final battle between good and evil, then the preservation of the biosphere is seen as a "secular" or "globalist" distraction. The mandate to exercise dominion over the earth is frequently misinterpreted as a license to consume and destroy in the pursuit of higher theological goals. This creates a dangerous feedback loop where the environmental crises caused by permanent warfare lead to further resource scarcity, which in turn justifies more "redemptive violence" to secure those resources. The moral reality of a poisoned planet is treated as another form of collateral damage, an externality that doesn't fit into the "video game" narrative of strategic success and munitions reserves.

10.3. The Cost of Occupying the Business and Government Mountains

The intersection of the business and government mountains creates a powerful synergy that institutionalizes the state of war. Under the Seven Mountain Mandate, the "reclamation" of the business mountain involves aligning corporate interests with the goals of the kingdom, leading to a defense industry that is not only economically entrenched but also theologically aligned. In 2026, this manifests as a "covenantal" relationship between the state and private military contractors, where the pursuit of profit is cloaked in the language of divine service. The cost of occupying these mountains is borne by the average taxpayer, while the profits are concentrated among an elite class of "kingdom-minded" executives and lobbyists who have a vested interest in the continuation of conflict.

This arrangement ensures that the national economy is tethered to the machinery of death. The necessity of war is reinforced by the economic requirement for perpetual growth in the defense sector, making peace a literal threat to the "Business Mountain" elites. The moral consequence of this is a society that has become addicted to conflict as a source of economic stability. As the national budget continues to hemorrhage wealth into the "sanctified" furnace of the Department of War, the real-world cost is found in the hollowing out of the middle class and the abandonment of the environmental and social spheres. The myth of redemptive violence thus functions as an economic engine, driving the nation toward a future where the only viable industry is the preparation for Armageddon, and the only "blessing" is the continued dominance of the military-industrial complex over all other aspects of human life.

11. Peace Journalism as a Moral Intervention

In a media landscape dominated by the clinical language of defense contractors and the apocalyptic fervor of dominionist theologians, the work of Robert Koehler stands as a significant moral intervention. Koehler's approach, which he characterizes as peace journalism, deliberately pivots away from the strategic "video game" narratives of mainstream reporting to focus on the irreducible value of human life. This methodology is not merely a different style of reporting; it is a profound ethical challenge to the myth of redemptive violence. By refusing to accept the "academic shrug" that accompanies news of civilian casualties, Koehler's writing functions as a site of resistance against the dehumanization required for permanent warfare. In the context of 2026, where the state seeks to sanctify its military operations through the Seven Mountain Mandate, Koehler's work provides a necessary counter-liturgy. It insists that the true cost of war is not measured in munitions reserves or political capital, but in the shattered lives of individuals and the moral degradation of the society that launches the bombs.

11.1. Robert Koehler and the Tradition of Prophetic Lament

Robert Koehler's journalism is rooted in the tradition of prophetic lament—a form of public witness that gives voice to communal grief and moral outrage in the face of systemic injustice. Unlike standard opinion writing, which often seeks to persuade through logical or partisan arguments, prophetic lament seeks to disturb the conscience by making the suffering of the "other" unavoidable. Koehler's columns frequently begin with a visceral acknowledgment of pain—his own or that of others—effectively "shredding" the emotional distance that strategic reporting works so hard to maintain. By integrating his personal experiences of loss and single parenting with his critique of national policy, he demonstrates that the political is always personal and that the "hell of war" is not an abstraction but a lived reality for thousands.

This tradition of lament serves a crucial function in a culture saturated with the myth of redemptive violence. It creates a space for the public to feel the weight of their government's actions. When Koehler writes about the school children in Minab, he is not just reporting a statistic; he is performing a ritual of remembrance that defies the state's attempt to write off these lives as collateral damage. His writing demands that the reader stay awake to the "spirit of goodness" that is violated by every act of state-sponsored killing. By positioning himself as a "peace journalist," Koehler aligns his work with the biblical prophets who called their nations to account for prioritizing military alliances and chariots over the weightier matters of justice and mercy.

11.2. Re-Humanizing the News Cycle

The primary objective of Koehler's peace journalism is the systematic re-humanization of the news cycle. This involves a deliberate choice to replace technical terminology—such as "missile-

launching capability" and "maritime commerce"—with the names, ages, and dreams of the victims of conflict. Re-humanization is a subversive act in an era where the Seven Mountain Mandate seeks to frame entire populations as "barbaric savages." By restoring the humanity of the adversary, Koehler's work collapses the binary thinking required for "no mercy" military policies. He argues that the evolution of humanity is participatory and that our primary gift to the future should be a world where all life is treated as sacred rather than as a strategic variable.

This re-humanization also extends to the reader. Peace journalism seeks to activate compassion rather than judgment, empowering the audience to see themselves as part of a global human community rather than as spectators of a distant "video game." Koehler's focus on restorative justice and "peace circles" offers a practical alternative to the retributive violence advocated by figures like Hegseth. By reporting on the complex story—one that includes the grievances and humanity of all sides—he disrupts the simplistic "us-vs-them" narratives that fuel the quest for dominion over the government mountain. In doing so, he provides a template for a journalism that heals rather than harms, inviting the public to transition beyond the "obsolete" values of competitiveness and dominance toward a reality based on mutual understanding and shared vulnerability.

11.3. The Role of the Journalist as a Theological Dissident

In the current era of American Christian Nationalism, Robert Koehler takes on the role of the theological dissident. By invoking thinkers like Walter Wink to critique the rhetoric of the Department of Defense, he uses the language of faith to dismantle the state's pseudo-theological justifications for war. This is a critical function because it challenges the Seven Mountain Mandate on its own ground. While dominionist leaders claim a divine mandate for "taking the mountains," Koehler points out that such a mandate is a form of idolatry—the worship of violence as a god. He exposes the "myth of redemptive violence" as an ancient Babylonian relic that has no place in a truly Christian or ethical worldview.

As a theological dissident, the journalist becomes a defender of the moral imagination. Koehler's work insists that war is not inevitable and that the "ho-hum" acceptance of conflict is a failure of both faith and intellect. By highlighting the environmental disasters and social costs of permanent warfare, he argues that the quest for dominion is ultimately a quest for self-destruction. The journalist as a dissident does not merely report on the world; he or she calls for a "personal paradigm shift" that is "life-shaking and non-negotiable." In 2026, this role is essential for preserving the possibility of a de-militarized spirituality, offering a way out of the "treacherous insanity" of modern geopolitics and toward a future where power is defined by the ability to love rather than the ability to kill.

12. Conclusion: Reclaiming the Ethics of Peace in an Age of Dominion

The ideological landscape of 2026 reveals a nation at a profound moral crossroads, where the machinery of the state has been increasingly tethered to a theology of conquest. The synthesis of the Seven Mountain Mandate with the operational doctrine of the Department of War represents a departure from the secular, pluralistic foundations of American governance. This paper has demonstrated that the rebranding of defense as a sanctified crusade is not merely a rhetorical flourish but a systemic reorientation that prioritizes dominion over diplomacy and firepower over human rights. As the myth of redemptive violence finds a new and potent expression in the halls of the Pentagon, the ethical guardrails that once moderated the use of force are being dismantled in favor of an apocalyptic pursuit of victory. Reclaiming the ethics of peace in this age of dominion requires more than a policy shift; it demands a fundamental rejection of the belief that violence can serve as a redemptive force. To move toward a sustainable future, American society must confront the idolatry of the sword and rediscover a moral framework that values the neighbor—and the enemy—as inherently human.

12.1. Summary of Findings

This investigation has identified several critical trends that define the current intersection of faith and military power. First, the Seven Mountain Mandate has successfully transitioned from a fringe charismatic movement to a central influence within the executive branch, providing a theological blueprint for occupying the "mountain of government." This has resulted in the elevation of leaders like Pete Hegseth, who utilize the language of "holy war" and "no mercy" to justify unprecedented levels of military aggression. Second, the myth of redemptive violence—as diagnosed by Walter Wink—serves as the psychological backbone of this movement, allowing for the total dehumanization of adversaries such as the Iranian people. The rhetorical shift toward "Secretary of War" and the use of Crusader iconography are markers of a military culture that views lethal force as a divine instrument.

Furthermore, we found that mainstream media plays a complicit role by abstracting the human cost of these policies into sterile strategic data. The "academic shrug" that greeted the devastating 2026 strike on the Minab school, which claimed the lives of over one hundred children, illustrates a profound failure of the fourth estate to act as a moral witness. The case study of Minab highlights the lethal gap between high-level "video game" narratives and the visceral reality of blood and destruction on the ground. Finally, the economic and environmental costs of this permanent war footing are being externalized as "sacred sacrifices," leading to a sanctification of scarcity that harms both the domestic population and the global biosphere. These findings suggest that the current trajectory is one of "treacherous insanity," where the pursuit of a theological kingdom threatens to destroy the very world it seeks to rule.

12.2. The Future of American Pluralism Under 7MM Influence

The future of American pluralism is increasingly precarious as the Seven Mountain Mandate seeks not just a seat at the table, but the head of it. Pluralism relies on the existence of a neutral public square where diverse viewpoints can coexist without the threat of state-sponsored religious hegemony. However, the 7MM's explicit goal of "reclaiming" mountains—particularly government, media, and education—is inherently exclusionary. When the state begins to operate according to a "crusader" identity, those who do not share that specific theological vision are framed not as fellow citizens, but as obstacles to be overcome or "territory" to be conquered. This creates a civic environment defined by "spiritual militancy," where political disagreement is interpreted as demonic resistance.

The long-term consequence of this shift is the erosion of trust in democratic institutions. If the Department of War becomes a pulpit for sectarian prayer and the defense budget a tithe for dominion, the secular bond that holds a diverse nation together begins to fray. The marginalized and those of different faiths—including the very "other" religions noted in 2026 sociological trends—find themselves in a state of "sanctuary resistance," fighting to preserve their place in a society that increasingly views them through a lens of suspicion. The survival of American democracy depends on its ability to decouple its military might from its religious fervor, ensuring that the "mountain of government" remains a protector of all citizens rather than a weapon of a single, militant orthodoxy.

12.3. Final Call for a De-Militarized Spirituality

In response to the rising tide of dominionism, there is an urgent need for a de-militarized spirituality—one that recovers the prophetic call to love one's neighbor and seek justice for the poor. As Bishop Mariann Budde and other faith leaders have pleaded in the wake of the 2026 escalations, true faith should function as a check on power, not as its cheerleader. A de-militarized spirituality rejects the "myth of redemptive violence" in favor of the "solidarity of the wounded." It acknowledges that the "us-vs-them" binary is obsolete in a world facing shared threats like climate collapse and global pandemics. This form of faith does not seek to "take mountains" through force but seeks to build bridges through mercy and mutual aid.

This final call is an invitation to move beyond the "hell of war" and toward a "peace journalism" of the soul. It requires individuals and communities to refuse the "academic shrug" and instead engage in the difficult work of restorative justice and peace circles. To dismantle the theological-military industrial complex, we must first dismantle the altars of violence within our own narratives of security and success. The future of humanity depends on our ability to envision a world where the cross is no longer a hilt for a sword, but a symbol of radical, non-violent love that refuses to see any child as "collateral damage." Only by embracing a spirituality of peace

can we hope to end the march of redemptive violence and begin the work of healing a fractured world.

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